



Khator started at the University of Houston after 22 years at USF. **Special to the Oracle**

A whole new rodeo

Former Provost Renu Khator transitions from the Bulls to the Cougars in her new position as president and chancellor of the University of Houston.

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Posted: 3/19/08

After the administrative deck was shuffled last year, the University's former provost, who is now chancellor at the University of Houston (UH), and her replacement are settling into their new roles.

Renu Khator recently ended a 22-year career at USF and accepted a dual position at UH, becoming president at one of its universities and chancellor for the entire UH system. The UH system is made up of four independently accredited schools, two teaching facilities, and a television and public radio station.

As part of her transition, she is conducting a rigorous 100-day campaign to acquaint herself with faculty, students, community members, donors, alumni and legislators all over Texas. She has met with all six chancellors of Texas' universities and many CEOs and presidents from the state's schools. She has traveled to Austin five times and took a trip to Washington, DC, to meet Texas' congressional representatives.

"She said she doesn't want any open time in her calendar for 100 days," said Theresa Singletary, Khator's administrative assistant. "I don't think we could stop her if we tried."

Like Singletary, Dan Gardner moved to UH from USF with Khator. He now serves as her chief of staff and said Khator has been "very systematic about understanding the government structure at UH and the state's political landscape."

Gardner said one of Khator's goals is to increase UH's profile as a research university.

"What she is doing is very similar to what (has been) done at USF," he said.

USF and UH are both major metropolitan universities with more than 40,000 students, though they differ in that USF has a medical school, and UH has a law school and a highly regarded hotel and restaurant management program, Khator said.

UH students are concerned about the same issues as those at USF, such as parking and computer access. Khator noted the diversity of the UH population, calling it "one of - if not the - most diverse student populations in the country." She said her goal is to "harness every bit of intellectual energy" to help her students compete in a global economy.

Khator said Texas universities, including UH, will not contend with the same financial crises faced by Florida

schools because Texas' economy depends on oil revenues, which are high.

USF's current provost, Ralph Wilcox, who was a faculty member at UH, said Texas was on comparatively "solid economic footing" because of differences between Florida's and Texas' economies and what he called a greater willingness on Texas' part to invest in higher education.

"Many public universities are having to rely more and more on private donations as taxpayers reduce their investment in higher education," Wilcox said, speaking of the challenges he faces as USF's new provost. Wilcox said his transition from vice provost to Khator's former position was relatively smooth because of how closely they had worked together as she was "transitioning out."

He said he learned a lot from her.

"My focus now is to help steer USF through these challenging and difficult economic times," he said.

Like Khator, Wilcox is traveling more, having recently signed an agreement in China for USF's new Confucius Institute, and is spending more time in the USF community, attending faculty luncheons and ceremonies such as the one held recently to honor the 35th anniversary of the Women's Studies program's founding.

Khator said she has no regrets about leaving, but she does miss USF and the people at the University very much.

"I joined there as an infant in my academic career," she said, crediting UH's staff and students with supporting her transition to Houston. "I've never felt (like) an outsider."

She added that she will no longer have time to conduct research or teach as she sometimes did as provost at USF. She said she will have little time for anything until the end of her 100-day campaign - since her days typically begin at 7 a.m. and don't end until 11 p.m. - except for early morning yoga and occasional jogs around her new neighborhood.